

Message Text

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66/45

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 IO-12 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

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R 111344 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1121

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

USMISSION GENEVA

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - T E X T P A R A N B R E D T W O

E. O.11652: N/A

TAGS: PARM, FR, CH

SUBJECT: FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTING - OPPOSITION CONTINUES
TO URGE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE FIRMER STAND

REF: LONDON 5151

1. IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS MAY 10 THE OPPOSITION
CONTINUED TO PRESS THE GOVT TO TAKE A STRONG STAND WITH
THE FRENCH GOVT AGAINST NUCLEAR TESTS IN THE PACIFIC.
THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION HAROLD WILSON ASKED WHAT
LINE THE PRIME MINISTER HAD TAKEN ON THE FRENCH TESTS
WHEN HE MET THE AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER. MR. HEATH
REPLIED THAT HE TAKES EXACTLY THE SAME LINE AS WILSON
DID WHEN IN OFFICE. THE PRIME MINISTER REFUSED TO BE
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DRAWN WHEN ASKED BY WILSON WHETHER HE REJECTED OR SUPPORTED THE TESTS. TO A CONSERVATIVE BACKBENCHER WHO ASKED WHETHER HMG COULD NOT USE THE GREATEST PRESSURE POSSIBLE ON FRANCE TO STOP THE TESTS, HEATH AGAIN GAVE A BLAND ANSWER, NOTING THAT THE FRENCH GOVT HAS LONG BEEN AWARE OF THE BRITISH VIEWS AND THAT AT WHITLAM'S REQUEST HMG TRANSMITTED TO THE FRENCH THE RESOLUTION OF THE PACIFIC FORUM. HEATH REBUTTED CONTENTION OF A LABOR MP THAT THE TESTS COULD BE HARMFUL TO BRITISH SUBJECTS IN THE AREA BY STATING THAT BRITAIN HAD ALWAYS MONITORED THESE TESTS AND HAD NOT FOUND THAT BRITISH SUBJECTS SUFFERED FROM THEM.

2. IN A GENERAL COMMONS DEBATE WHICH FOLLOWED THE PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTION PERIOD, LABOR RETURNED TO THE CHWGGT

WITH DEMANDS THAT HMG MAKE A FORTHRIGHT STATEMENT ON THE FRENCH TESTS. GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS ARE TEPID AND "WE ARE PUSSY- FOOTING ON THIS MATTER" SAID THE SHADOW DEFENSE SECRETARY. HE CONJECTURED PERHAPS IT IS BECAUSE BRITIAN WAS TAKING A NEW EUROPEAN STANCE; PERHAPS THE UK WAS SEEKING FRENCH SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY OR DREAMING OF THE DAY WHEN THERE WOULD BE AN ANGLO- FRENCH NUCLEAR DETERRENT. THE GOVT SPOKESMAN TURNED ASIDE THE LABOR INPORTUNINGS WITH THE STANDARD BUT OVER- WORKED GOVT REPLY THAT THE UK HOPED FRANCE WOULD ADHERE TO THE PARTIAL TEST BAN TREATY AND THAT HMG HAD MADE KNOWN ITS VIEWS TO THE FRENCH.

3. COMMENT: LABOR OPPOSITION AND A NUMBER OF CONSERVATIVE BACKBENCHERS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY KEEP THE HEAT ON THE GOVT BY TAKING A STRONG STAND WITH THE FRENCH AGAINST THE TESTS AND TO SUPPORT THE AUSTRALIANS AND NEW ZEALANDERS. IT IS HOWEVER QUITE APPARENT THAT THIS GOVT HAS NO INTENTION OF DOING SO. ASIDE FROM THE BRITISH DESIRE TO AVOID GIVING NEEDLESS OFFENCE TO THE FRENCH, IT IS GENERALLY ACCEPTED HERE THAT FRENCH WILL NOT BE DETERRED BY PUBLIC OR OFFICIAL CRITICISM.

ANNENBERG

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